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ABSTRACT

This article adopts a motivational stance in identifying factors that strongly predict physical activity in children. One model for understanding physical activity motivation in children portrays the sources and consequences of self-esteem for physical activity behavior (perceived competency/adequacy, social support, enjoyment, and physical activity behavior). Perceived competence refers to individuals' judgments about their ability in a particular area. Considerable evidence shows that youth who report stronger beliefs about their physical competencies are more likely to enjoy activity and sustain interest in continuing involvement, which in turn enhances motivation to be physically active. Providing enjoyable experiences is a potent strategy for increasing activity levels in youth, their attitude about the value of exercise, and ultimately long-term health outcomes. Research shows that sport commitment is influenced by enjoyment, involvement alternatives, personal investments, social constraints, and involvement opportunities. Significant adults and peers emerge time and again as sources of physical competence and self-worth, sources of enjoyment, and determinants of commitment to activity. Intervention strategies for maintaining and enhancing physical activity motivation in children include: provide optimal challenges, create a mastery motivational climate, make physical activity fun, and help children help themselves. (Contains 37 references.) (SM)

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Research Digest
Motivating Kids in Physical Activity

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

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Research Digest

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Motivating Kids in Physical Activity

Introduction

For many years interest in children's physical activity has focused upon beneficial health related outcomes, such as reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and obesity. From a social psychological vantage, however, the focus on *consequences* of physical activity precludes an understanding of the *determinants* of physical activity behavior. That is, what *motivates* children and teenagers to continue and sustain physical activity levels? *Why* is there such a dramatic decline in physical activity during adolescence, and *how* can we stem the tide of declining physical activity levels? Such a motivational perspective hones in on possible intervention strategies that can be implemented by parents, teachers, coaches, and peer groups who play such an active role in the lives of youth in home, neighborhood, school, and sport contexts. Keeping kids motivated to participate in physical activities will then naturally lead to touted health outcomes. This article adopts a motivational stance in identifying the factors that strongly predict physical activity in kids.

The *Guidelines for School and Community Programs to Promote Lifelong Physical Activity Among Young People* (CDC, 1997) highlights the contributions that social-contextual, psychological, and emotional factors play in youths' physical activity behavior. Most notably, perceptions of competence (e.g., physical ability, physical appearance), enjoyment of physical activity, and social support by parents, teachers/coaches, and peers were cited as essential influences on physical activity in children and teenagers. Recent studies by sport and exercise psychologists provide empirical evidence for the role of these predictors of participation behavior, and specify the *mechanisms* by which these constructs effect change in behavior (Weiss, in press; Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, in press). Motivation is defined as behavioral choice, effort, persistence, and performance and can be translated to the physiological jargon of frequency, intensity, duration, and level of physical activity.

Research on reasons why children and adolescents participate in physical activity (leisure-time activity, organized sports) consistently points to three major motives (Weiss, 1993a; Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, in press). First, youths want to *develop and demonstrate physical competence*, such as athletic skills, physical fitness, and physical appearance. Second, *gaining social acceptance and support* including friendships, peer group acceptance, and approval, reinforcement, and encouragement by significant adults (parents, teachers, coaches) is key to initiating and continuing participation. Third, *fun* derived from participation maximizes positive and minimizes negative experiences related to physical activity. Enjoyment is likely to enhance the attractiveness of the current activity and decrease the appeal of alternative activities (e.g., gangs, at-risk behaviors). In sum, research findings suggest that interventions designed to enhance perceptions of competence, social support, and enjoyment will result in children and youth maintaining and increasing physical activity participation levels.

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A Model for Understanding Physical Activity Motivation in Kids

The three major reasons for participating in physical activity are captured within Susan Harter's (1987) model of self-esteem, which was adapted for the physical activity domain (Figure 1) by Weiss and Ebbeck (1996). This model portrays the sources and consequences of self-esteem for physical activity behavior. Perceived competence/adequacy and social support represent determinants of self-esteem, and enjoyment and physical activity behavior are outcomes.

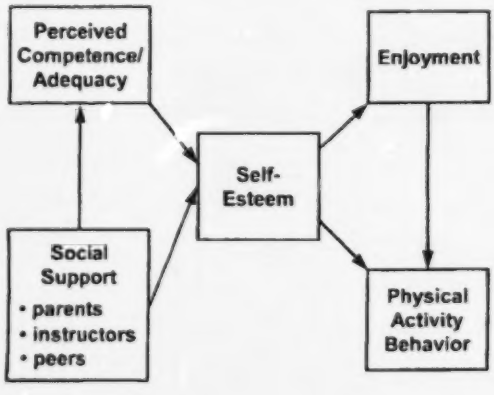

Figure 1. Susan Harter's (1987) mediational model of global self-worth customized for the physical domain.

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The model is developmental in nature because of age and gender differences in level and sources of perceived competence, use of adults versus peers to judge competence and self-worth, and sources of physical activity enjoyment. This information is invaluable for customizing physical activity interventions to the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social maturity level of targeted youth. This point is especially salient because a developmental perspective is advocated by the CDC (1997) and sport science researchers (Horn & Claytor, 1993; Rowland, 1990; Weiss, in press), and ensures that the child or teenager is not viewed as a miniature adult. Given the powerful role of perceived competence, enjoyment, and significant adults and peers, discussion now turns to what we know about each topic and how we can maximize physical activity in children and teenagers.

Perceptions of Physical Competence

Perceived competence refers to individuals' judgments about their ability in a particular area such as school, peer relationships, or physical activity. Our interest is in perceived *physical* competence or how children evaluate how adequate they are in sports, physical attractiveness, and physical fitness. Considerable evidence shows that youth who report stronger beliefs about their physical competencies are more likely to enjoy activity and sustain interest in continuing involvement than children who report lower levels of physical competence (Weiss & Ebbeck, 1996; Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, in press). Greater enjoyment and interest, in turn, enhance children's motivation to be physically active.

Because perceived physical competence reliably predicts motivated behavior, one naturally may ask the question, "How do children *know* how physically capable they are? What information do youth access to form self-evaluations of ability? Such information is essential for understanding how to enhance perceived physical competence in youth. Several studies have sought to answer these questions (Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, in press). In physical activity or sport contexts, available information includes outcome, social, and internal sources. Outcome sources include things such as performance statistics, fitness testing standards, external rewards (e.g., trophies, ribbons), and event outcome (e.g., winning, finish place). Social sources include feedback and reinforcement from parents, teachers, and coaches, as well as evaluation by and comparison to peers. Internal sources include self-referencing such as skill improvement in relation to past performance, enjoyment of activity, effort exerted, and achievement of personal goals. Although each of these sources is available to youth in the physical domain, age and gender differences exist in the relative use of these sources (Horn & Harris, 1996).

Younger children (about ages 5-9 years) tend to use mastery of simple tasks, trying hard, enjoyment of activity, and feedback from parents as primary means by which to judge physical ability. For example, making contact with the ball, learning a new athletic skill, exerting effort in skill learning, and receiving parental approval for participation constitute sources of competence information for this age group. Over the course of the childhood and early adolescent years, a shift from these sources to peer comparison/evaluation and teacher/coach feedback emerges. Youth ages 10-15 years become more competitive and seek to do better than same-age peers. When their ability stacks up favorably to their classmates, this information conveys that they are physically competent. Because teachers and coaches express approval verbally and non-verbally in the presence of one's peer group, this source of information is yet another index of physical achievement. In later adolescence, emphasis on social comparison and evaluation again shifts, this time to use of more internal sources. Teenagers ages16-18 years now depend more on achievement of self-set goals, attraction toward physical activity, and personal improvement as primary indicators of competence. Because of the public nature in which physical activity and sport takes place, peer comparison and teacher/coach feedback remain salient forms of self-judgment criteria.

Gender differences in criteria for judging physical competence do not emerge until the high school years (Horn & Harris, 1996). Boys cite competitive outcomes and speed and ease of learning new skills as more important than girls do. By contrast, teenage girls indicate greater use of internal sources (attraction toward physical activity, achievement of goals) and social sources (feedback and evaluation by adults and peers) more frequently. These trends in information sources by adolescent females and males are likely the result of differential socialization experiences.

These age and gender trends provide essential information for understanding the *mechanisms* by which children and adolescents come to evaluate their self-competencies in physical activity. More importantly, they offer a window for intervention strategies that should be effective for enhancing physical self-perceptions in children. In particular, *creating an environment* that will enhance children's perceived competence, and *helping children help themselves* by providing them with self regulation skills (e.g., goal setting) that allow them to independently enhance their own perceptions should translate to greater enjoyment, self-esteem, motivation, *and* physical activity behavior.

Enjoyment of Physical Activity

Rowland and Freedson (1994) urged that children and youth must develop a lifestyle of regular physical activity to maximize long-term health benefits. To do this, they argued, means "turning children on" to physical activity by making it *enjoyable* and keeping them coming back because of an *intrinsic desire* to be physically active. *Providing enjoyable experiences* is a potent strategy for increasing activity levels in youth, their attitude about the value of exercise, and ultimately long-term health outcomes. But what factors will enhance the probability that physical activity will be fun for children and youth? More specifically, what social-environmental and individual difference factors maintain or enhance children's interest in participating in physical activity (Weiss, 1993b)?

Scanlan and her colleagues have conducted several studies on sources of enjoyment among youth in various activities such as club volleyball, Little League baseball, age-group swimming, and high-level figure skating (see Scanlan & Simons, 1992). Robust enjoyment sources included positive social interactions, support, and involvement from parents, coaches, and peers, self-perceptions of physical ability, social recognition of physical competence, effort exerted in learning and demonstrating skills, mastery and achievement of skills, and movement sensations. Movement sensations represent a unique component to physical activity experiences that are not found in other achievement domains (academic, music, art). Children and youth often report exhilaration from gliding through the water while swimming or skiing, negotiating a path while speeding on rollerblades, and flipping through the air in gymnastics and skating. We must be mindful of these particular sources of enjoyment as we seek to offer opportunities for experiencing fun.

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Scanlan and Simons (1992) situated *enjoyment* within a larger model of motivation that they call the sport commitment model. *Sport commitment* is defined as the desire and resolve to continue participation in an activity (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, et al., 1993). The model consists of five determinants that influence commitment to an activity in a positive or negative way (see Figure 2). *Sport enjoyment* is defined as a positive affective response to an activity that reflects feelings of pleasure, liking, and fun. *Involvement alternatives* reflect attractiveness of other activities that could compete with continued participation in the current activity. Three constructs were identified as barriers to discontinuing one's current involvement. *Personal investments* pertain to the time, effort, energy, and any other resources that would be lost if participation in the activity was discontinued. *Social constraints* refer to perceived pressure from significant adults and peers to remain in the activity that instills a sense of obligation to continue involvement. Finally, *involvement opportunities* are the anticipated benefits afforded from continued participation in physical activity such as friendships, positive interactions with adults, skill mastery, and enhanced physical conditioning or appearance.

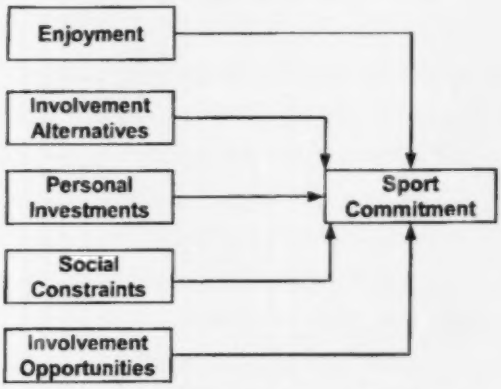

Figure 2. Model of sport commitment (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, et al., 1993).

The positive relationship posited between social constraints and sport commitment resides upon the expected negative consequences that would occur if one were to cease their involvement in an activity. For example, Klint and Weiss (1986) found that young gymnasts were resistant to discontinuing their participation for fear of losing their gym friends and letting down their teammates and coaches. Similarly, Coakley and White (1992) found that female adolescents identified pressure from same-sex friends as a factor motivating them to stay involved in physical activity. In commitment studies conducted thus far, enjoyment has consistently emerged as the strongest predictor of children's and adolescents' resolve to continue sport and physical activity involvement.

Social Support from Parents, Teachers/Coaches, and Peers

Significant adults and peers have emerged time and again as sources of physical competence and self-worth, sources of enjoyment, and determinants of commitment to activity. Parents, teachers/coaches, and peers through their feedback, reinforcement, modeling, and structuring of opportunities have tremendous influence on children's perceptions of physical competence, enjoyment of physical activity, self-esteem, motivation, *and* physical activity behaviors (level, frequency, intensity). In the last decade, considerable research has unveiled a better understanding of *how* these significant others exert influence on children's and teenagers' physical activity experiences (figure 3).

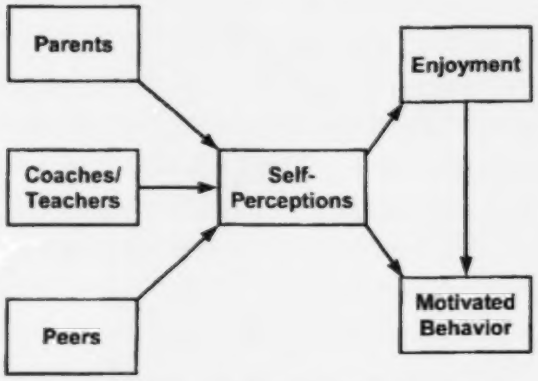

Figure 3. Influence of significant adults and peers on self-perceptions, enjoyment, and motivation

Parents. A number of studies illustrate a strong link between parental beliefs, expectancies, and behaviors with children's competency beliefs, enjoyment of and levels of physical activity (Brustad,1996a). Parents are especially important as transmitters of information about their child's competence and the value of physical activity through the mechanisms of modeling and reinforcement behaviors. For example, parents who recognize and reinforce their child's interest and participation in physical activity through verbal and nonverbal means, and who model enjoyment of their own physical activity, convey the message that physical activity is an important domain.

Brustad (1993, 1996b) conducted a series of studies on the influence of parental attitudes and behaviors on children's physical competence perceptions and affective responses to physical activity. Parents who reported greater enjoyment of physical activity were more encouraging of their children to be active. Greater parental enjoyment and encouragement were associated with higher levels of children's perceived competence and attraction to physical activity. The findings varied by gender: parents gave more encouragement to their sons than daughters, and girls reported lower perceived physical competence and positive affect toward physical activity than did boys. These findings were extended to lower socioeconomic youth in a large urban area (Brustad, 1996b).

Kimiecik and colleagues' (Dempsey et al., 1993; Kimiecik & Horn, 1998; Kimiecik et al., 1996) have contributed a better understanding of parental influence on children's physical activity involvement. Dempsey et al. (1993) examined the relation between parent beliefs and behaviors and children's moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA). Children whose parents held higher competency beliefs for them recorded higher MVPA levels. In Kimiecik et al. (1996) children who perceived that their parents valued fitness and held high competency beliefs for them reported higher fitness competence. Finally, Kimiecik and Horn (1998) found that parent-reported MVPA was not related to child's MVPA (i.e., no support for role modeling effects), but parents' competency beliefs for their child were significantly related to the child's MVPA.

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The preceding studies provide rather consistent findings about parental influence in youth physical activity. Parents who are seen as confident about their child's abilities, supportive of physical activity involvement, and experience enjoyment in their own activity are associated with young participants who report greater ability perceptions, positive affect, motivation, and frequency and intensity of physical activity. Moreover, children's *perceptions* of parents' beliefs and behaviors are more strongly related to their self-evaluations and physical activity behaviors than parent-reported beliefs and behaviors.

Teachers/Coaches. Coaches' and teachers' feedback and reinforcement comprise *informational* (i.e., instruction) or *evaluative* (e.g., praise, criticism) responses to participation and performance. Several intervention studies by Smith and Smoll (1996) demonstrate that the quantity and quality of coaches' feedback result in positive outcomes for young sport participants. Coaches who engaged in more frequent praise for desirable behaviors (effort, technique), encouragement following skill errors, and instruction following performance attempts were associated with players who were higher in perceived ability, enjoyment, and intention to continue playing, and lower in anxiety and attrition rates. Perhaps one of the most powerful findings was the significant pre-post season increase in global self-esteem for children who began the season with low self-esteem and who played for trained coaches.

Horn (1985) studied the influence of coaches' behaviors on 13-15 year-old female players' perceptions of softball competence over the course of a season. Players who received more frequent praise following successful performances scored *lower* in perceived competence, while players who received greater frequencies of criticism in response to errors reported *higher* competence perceptions. These paradoxical results were explained in terms of the *contingent* nature of the feedback that was provided. Specifically, praise was not given for *specific and challenging* skills, but was offered for mastering easy skills or exhibiting mediocre performance. In contrast, criticism was given based on specific performance levels and combined with information on how to improve on subsequent mastery attempts. To further support this inference, Horn (1984) reported that lower skilled players were given more praise, while more talented athletes received more criticism for their efforts. Subsequent studies that replicated and extended Horn's (1984, 1985) research and supported her conclusions (Allen & Howe, 1998; Black & Weiss, 1992).

In the physical education classroom Ferrer-Caja and Weiss (in press) tested the efficacy of a motivational model among female and male students in high school classes. For females, a mastery motivational climate (teacher emphasized skill learning over competition) and a non-directive teaching style (teacher allowed students choices in their activities) positively influenced perceptions of physical competence, a task goal orientation (defining success in self-referenced ways), and perceptions of autonomy. In turn, self-perceptions were strong predictors of intrinsic motivation and physical activity behaviors (e.g., effort and persistence).

Collectively, these studies imply that coaches and teachers who structure a learning environment that encourages a self-referenced definition of success (e.g., improvement, mastery, enjoyment), rather than normative standards or peer comparison, are likely to positively influence students' self-perceptions, emotional reactions, and motivation to continue activity involvement. Teachers and coaches who allow their participants some choices in activity selection are associated with students who feel empowered that they determine their own behaviors, and this is positively tied to motivated behaviors. Finally, coaches and teachers who use the principles of reinforcement and informational feedback effectively and appropriately will have a positive impact on their learners.

Peers. One's peer group and close friends (classmates, teammates, neighborhood pals) are powerful socializing agents who contribute beyond the influence of adults to children's psychosocial development in school *and* physical activity involvement (Weiss, in press; Weiss et al., 1996). Both peer acceptance and close friendship are salient aspects of peer relationships and interactions. *Peer acceptance* refers to one's popularity and status within one's peer group. Research shows a strong linkage between physical competence and peer acceptance (Kunesh, Hasbrook, & Lewthwaite, 1992; Weiss & Duncan, 1992). Children and teenagers who are physically skilled and hold positive beliefs about their abilities, tend to be more popular with their peer group. Moreover, unskilled youth may be the source of ridicule, exclusion, and lack of opportunities. Children who feel that they are popular with their peer group are motivated to continue participation to maintain their friendships, experience greater enjoyment and less anxiety associated with physical activity, and report higher levels of motivation.

Friendship refers to specific aspects of a dyadic peer relationship, such as similarity, companionship, esteem enhancement, loyalty, and emotional support. Studies show that children view sports as an arena in which to develop close friendships that allow opportunities for emotional support and self-esteem affirmation (Weiss et al., 1996). Weiss and Smith (1999, Weiss et al., 1996) conducted a series of studies to understand the nature of physical activity-related friendships and their role in children's psychosocial development and physical activity participation. Several positive dimensions of best activity-related friendships emerged for 8-16 year-old participants such as self-esteem enhancement, companionship, pleasant play and association, intimacy, loyalty, emotional support, and conflict resolution. Younger children (ages 10-13) cited companionship and pleasant play more frequently as characteristics of their best sport friendships, while older youth (ages 14-18) rated loyalty and intimacy, things in common, and conflict higher. Girls rated self-esteem enhancement and supportiveness, loyalty and intimacy, and things in common higher, and boys rated conflict higher. Finally, youth who reported higher friendship quality on companionship and pleasant play reported greater sport enjoyment and a stronger desire to stay involved in their participation.

Some studies have focused upon the influence of close friendship on children's psychosocial development and physical activity involvement. Duncan (1993) examined the influence of esteem support and companionship dimensions of friendship on emotional and motivational outcomes among 12-15 year-old middle school youth. Girls and boys who perceived greater friendship quality in these two areas reported greater enjoyment doing physical activities and interest in choosing activities outside of the school setting. Smith (1999) found that middle school girls' and boys' perceptions of close friendship were significantly related to physical self-worth, positive affect, intrinsic motivation, *and* physical activity levels. Specifically, both female and male youths who reported they had a close friend in sport or physical activities felt better about themselves physically, liked physical activity and sports more, were motivated by challenging activities, and were more physically active.

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Children describe many positive and few negative dimensions of close sport and physical activity friendships. They view these friendships as supportive relationships, ones that provide self-esteem enhancement, emotional support, loyalty, companionship, intimacy, and things in common such as values, interests, and activities. Moreover, friendship dimensions such as esteem support and companionship are related to feelings of self-worth, positive affect toward physical activity, and motivation to continue participation. Parents, teachers, and coaches should be educated and encouraged to help children develop close, supportive friendships within the physical activity context to accrue these benefits of peer interactions and relationships. Moreover, a physical activity intervention for early and middle adolescents would be remiss if peer relationships and interactions were not targeted as key components.

Enhancing Physical Activity in Kids

This article targets several determinants of children's motivation and physical activity. *Perceptions of competence* and self-esteem influence enjoyment and physical activity behaviors. Thus intervention strategies must focus upon maintaining and enhancing children's self-evaluations of physical ability to ensure continued interest and participation. *Enjoyment* and other positive emotional experiences associated with physical activity sustain commitment toward and actual levels of physical activity. The activities that kids do must be fun and more appealing than alternative unhealthy activities. Finally, social support by parents, teachers, coaches, and peers is essential to positive self-beliefs, enjoyment, and motivation to continue activity. The model depicted in Figure 1 conveys these relationships among social support, self-evaluations, enjoyment, and physical activity. Several intervention strategies for maintaining and enhancing motivation and physical activity in kids are offered based on this model.

Provide optimal challenges. An *optimal challenge* is one that matches the difficulty level of activities to the child's capabilities. Thus children's successful mastery of skills is within reach, but they must exert necessary effort and persistence to attain the goal. I like to think of optimal challenges as "matching the activity to the child, and not the child to the activity". Skills that are too easy in relation to a child's talents are boring and do not allow for realistic goals. Skills that are too difficult invoke anxiety and frustration when persistent efforts are unsuccessful. Because children use mastery of skills, effort expenditure, and self-improvement as criteria for determining how physically competent they are, optimal challenges offer children a prime opportunity for developing and demonstrating competence that is at the cutting edge of their capabilities. Teachers, coaches, and parents should ensure developmental progressions in skills and physical activities, collaborate with children in setting realistic goals for physical activity, and modify games or activities to allow for optimal challenges.

Create a mastery motivational climate. Coaches and teachers influence children's beliefs, affective responses, and behaviors by shaping the learning environment or *motivational climate* in which activities take place (Ames, 1992). Motivational climate focuses upon how success is defined, how children are evaluated, what is recognized and valued, and how mistakes are viewed. A *mastery* motivational climate is one that promotes learning, effort, and self-improvement, and mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process. Success is self-referenced, and personal improvements are recognized, praised, and emphasized. In contrast, a *performance* climate emphasizes norm-referenced modes of success, and evaluation for recognition that focus upon favorable comparison to peers. The motivational climate that is perceived by participants impacts their perceptions of ability, attraction toward physical activity, and motivation.

The acronym TARGET is used to identify effective strategies for structuring a mastery motivational climate in physical activity contexts. TARGET stands for dimensions of Task, Authority, Recognition, Grouping, Evaluation, and Time. Specifically, task variety and optimal challenges, opportunities for choice and shared decision-making, recognition of effort and self-improvement, partner and small-group problem-solving tasks, evaluation criteria focused on self-referenced standards, and adequate time for learning and demonstrating skills define the ingredients for maximizing a mastery climate. Parents, teachers, and coaches are charged with coloring the physical activity environment to achieve these "targeted" goals. Rather than focusing on performance outcomes, emphasizing peers' achievements, recognizing only the most talented youngsters, and using homogeneous ability-grouping (i.e., a performance climate), significant adults can instead cultivate children's view of physical activity through rose-colored lenses (i.e., mastery motivational climate). Because a mastery climate emphasizes cooperative learning rather than competition, diverse ability grouping, and recognition based on individual improvement and not peer comparison, this environment is also most conducive for fostering positive peer relationships, enhancing peer acceptance, and creating opportunities for close friendship development.

Make physical activity fun. Time and again enjoyment emerges as a strong predictor of motivated behavior. When we enjoy the activities that we do, we want to do them more often. This not only applies to children and teenagers, but adults as well! What makes activities fun? We know from studies with children and adolescents that high action and scoring, high personal involvement in the action, close games, and opportunities to affirm friendships are key to activity enjoyment (Coakley, 1993). Change-of-pace activities (e.g., varying activity type and doing so relatively often) and allowing children some choices in activity selection are also key (Weiss, 1991).

Help children help themselves. Mastering skills, achieving personal goals, and progressively improving are internal sources of information children and adolescents use to judge their physical competence. Competence beliefs, in turn, influence levels of self-esteem, enjoyment, motivation, and physical activity levels. Thus, teaching children self-regulated learning strategies such as goal setting and self-monitoring allow them to adopt self-reliant standards for enhancing their perceptions of competence (Weiss, 1995). Goals that are specific, optimally challenging, and self-referenced will point youth in the right direction for sustaining physical activity motivation. Self-monitoring of physical activity may include the use of training logs or diaries that can be used to compare current to past physical activity frequency, intensity, and duration.

As Director of the Children's Summer Sports Program for 15 years at the University of Oregon, I pulled together these motivational methods as "Weiss's Ten Commandments for Maximizing Motivation" (see Table 1). These principles are derived from theory, research, and practical experiences, and serve to consolidate the key points emphasized in this article.

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Table 1

Weiss's Ten Commandments for Maximizing Motivation

	Commandment	Principle
1	*Focus on teaching and practicing skills*:	maximize equipment, facilities, instructors; don't introduce competitive play too early; make sure it's fun – provide variety.
2	*Modify skills and activities*:	sequential progressions; modify space, equipment, rules; match the activity to the child, not the child to the activity.
3	*Realistic expectations for each child*:	individual learning rates and goals.
4	*Become an excellent demonstrator*:	lots of "show and tell"; repeated demonstrations; multiple angles.
5	*Catch kids doing things correctly*:	compliment, instruct, and encourage; provide optimal challenge as a follow-up.
6	*Reduce kids' fears of trying skills*:	provide an encouraging atmosphere – performance errors are part of the learning process; reduce fears of getting hurt – show how you've ensured safety; show empathy.
7	*KISS*:	keep instructions short and simple; maximize practice and playing time.
8	*Be enthusiastic*:	it's contagious! smile, interact, listen.
9	*Build character*:	be a role model; identify and take advantage of teachable moments.
10	*Let children make some choices*:	involve them in the decision-making process; ask questions.

Conclusion

There is no question that physical activity affords participants a number of physiological and psychological health benefits. People *know* that they should exercise, but *staying motivated* to be physically active at levels to accrue these benefits is another story. Because active children may lead to active adolescents and adults, we should focus our efforts on our youngest members of society. Specifically, significant adults are primed to structure the environment and exhibit behaviors that enhance children's physical competency beliefs, self-esteem, and enjoyment of physical activity. In turn, these perceptions and emotions are the keys to solving the mystery of motivating kids in physical activity.

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"Significant adults are primed to structure the environment and exhibit behaviors that enhance children's physical competency beliefs, self-esteem, and enjoyment of physical activity. In turn, these perceptions and emotions are the keys to solving the mystery of motivating kids in physical activity."

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